

Ren Hennig, Journalist/Author - 315 Main Street, Simpson PA 18407 - (717) 282-4246 - COPIED: 12/March/93

# Carbondale's 'UFO' Identified As Six-Volt Railroad Lantern

By JOHN HART JR.

"It was a hoax."  
Thus ended a weekend of rumor, speculation and what have you in the City of Carbondale, touched off Saturday night when three boys reported what many believed was a UFO (Unidentified Flying Object) falling into a silt pond.

Scuba divers recovered a railroad lantern from the bottom of the pond around 3:30 p.m. Monday.

Before the UFO story was laid to rest, specialists in the field were among the thousands who came to Carbondale amid Sunday and Monday reports which reached far and wide and brought phone calls from as far away as England.

Acting Police Chief Francis Dottle identified the lantern as the type used by railroad officials and said that the light was still lit when it was brought to the surface. The source of power to the lantern came from a six-volt Sears battery.

Dottle labeled the incident "a hoax" at a press conference later in the day.

Dr. A. J. Kaufman, Mayor of Carbondale and Acting Chief Dottle participated in the City Hall press conference at 6 p.m. The chief executive stressed that the police department did a great job under the leadership of Dottle in providing the safety measures for the residents of the city.

"As a medical doctor, I say safety comes first," Kaufman said, but he did not go into specifics as to the creditability of the story.

Dr. Kaufman said he was glad at the way things turned out, stating that if the incident progressed further, panic would have hit the city. "I received three calls this morning from residents asking me if they should leave their homes and time police left the area, then flee the city," Kaufman continued, "I told them no."

Dottle said that the investigation at the pond was over, but



THE LANTERN—Carbondale's Acting Police Chief Francis Dottle examines the railroad lantern that was pulled from the pond. Authorities insist the light is evidence that the UFO sighting was "a hoax." Behind Dottle is Carbondale Mayor A.J. Kaufman.

ENDING THE SUSPENSE—Searchers hold the lantern after it was pulled from the pond behind Carbondale's Russell Park Monday afternoon. Holding the light is Jerome Gillott. Others in the boat are Carbondale Patrolmen Mark Trella, left, and John Barbaro.



THE EXPERTS—Three UFO specialists go over data compiled after a 36-hour vigil at a mine water pond in Carbondale apparently ended with discovery of a railroad lantern. From left: Robert D. Barry, director of the 20th Century UFO Bureau, Collingswood, N.J.; Douglas Dain, regional director of the UFO Network Association in New York City, an arm of the Center for UFO Studies at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., and Matthew J. Graeber, director of the UFO Research Information Center, Philadelphia.

those who were there earlier in lantern. Dottle told a newsman the day, noticed that a backhoe broke the dam, made of silt, to drain the four-acre pond. By the time police left the area, the body of water had receded almost one foot and was still going down. Following the retrieval of the lantern, Dottle told a newsman, "if I ever find out who the hell threw it in... He did not elaborate. The story began to unfold early Saturday night when three police they saw a brightly shining object flash across the sky

and, seconds later, saw a light shining in the pond near Russell Park. Police discounted the report, but moments later sighting of a bright object was reported from several people in that area. Patrolman John Barbaro was dispatched to the scene and fired at least four shots at the shining object, it was reported.

Within minutes, police cordoned off the area to pedestrians and the press.

Police, under the direction of Dr. Alan Hyndk, an official from the Center for Unidentified Flying Object Studies, tried to retrieve the object from the pond with grappling hooks and nets. However, after some time, they accidentally covered the source of the light with debris from the bottom.

Early Sunday, hundreds of people were on the scene unrestricted by barriers or guards.

Dottle called for help from the Civil Air Patrol and by 5 p.m. the scene was once again closed to the public.

Section Director for the U.F.O. Network, Douglas Dain, arrived in the Pioneer City early Monday morning to direct operations.

The decision was then made by Dottle to call several area fire companies to the scene and start pumping out water. Heavy equipment also was brought in an attempt to dig a hole in the dam and release the water

All attempts to drain the area stopped when the scuba diver recovered the lantern, with the exception of the back hoe which succeeded in breaking the dike.

Dottle blamed the news media for blowing the incident out of proportion but never did give an explanation why the press was not allowed into the area when the incident first broke out.

"If they left us alone, we could have taken care of it quickly, but all these people came in," Dottle said.

Although Chief Dottle said the lantern was operational when it was retrieved, Mathew J. Graeber, of the Unidentified Flying Object Research and Identification Center in Philadelphia, said the lantern was "not operational" when recovered.

"It's quite possible the kids saw a shooting star and saw the glow in the water," Graeber said. "They did lose sight of the thing for a few seconds."

The investigation is over, according to police, but in the eyes of specialists at the scene, something could still exist in that pond and apparently speculation will not be put to rest until the bottom of the pond is